

VZCZCXRO2694
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DE RUEHJM #1818/01 2410450
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 290450Z AUG 07
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8848
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001818

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR
WILLIAMS/SHAMPAINE/BELRADE; PRM FOR PDAS GREENE AND
PRM/ANE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/WATERS; TREASURY FOR
SZUBIN/LOEFFLER/NUGENT/HIRSON; BRUSSELS FOR LERNER; PLEASE
PASS TO USAID FOR KUNDER/MCCLOUD/BORODIN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#)
SUBJECT: GAZA HEALTH CARE BECOMES PAWN IN HAMAS-FATAH POWER
STRUGGLE

REF: JERUSALEM 1764

11. (SBU) Summary: In reaction to Hamas' replacement of Fatah-affiliated hospital administrators in Gaza (reftel), the Fatah-affiliated labor unions of the Ministry of Health (MOH) in Gaza have been conducting work-stoppages as of August 23. An estimated 95 percent of MOH hospital employees have been working only from 0800-1100, Sunday through Thursday, according to Gaza-based World Health Organization (WHO) contacts. Union leaders have stated that the work-stoppage is scheduled until September 13, when a full strike may be called if Hamas does not stop "interfering in the Gaza health care sector." Hamas, in turn, has threatened to close down Gaza's "private clinics," which are, in general, the homes of Fatah-affiliated physicians who have been consulting patients from home (and charging fees) since the work-stoppage began. MOH pharmacies remain open only three hours each day and hospital in-patients are tended mostly by their family members. End summary.

Hamas-Fatah Battles
Extend To Health Care

12. (SBU) Gaza-based OCHA representative Hamada al-Bayari told econoff August 28 that Hamas replaced several PA-appointed hospital administrators in early August, alleging that they were unprofessional, incompetent and had stolen vast amount of hospital furniture for personal use. Gaza-based WHO information officer Dalia Salhah told econoff August 27 that the new Hamas-affiliated hospital administrators are experienced MOH hands, who, as a result of accepting the Hamas-filled positions, are no longer receiving PA salaries. She said that these new Hamas-affiliated administrators accepted their new positions due to their Hamas loyalties, and may receive cash payments from Hamas in place of PA salaries.

13. (SBU) The Fatah-affiliated MOH unions in Gaza, including those of physicians, pharmacists, technicians, and administrators, instructed their membership on August 23 to conduct work-stoppages during all hours but 0800-1100, Sunday through Thursday, in protest of Hamas' replacement of high-level Fatah-affiliated hospital administrators. According to news reports, the work-stoppage was explicitly ordered by the Fatah political leadership. Salhah said that roughly 95 percent of all MOH hospital employees have participated in the work-stoppages, limiting health care

options for Gaza residents to private hospitals and clinics, and NGO health care facilities. She said that the medical union leadership plans to continue the work-stoppage until September 13, when a full strike may be called if Hamas does not stop "interfering in the Gaza health care sector."

Gaza Physicians Double-Dipping

¶4. (SBU) OCHA's al-Bayari said that PA hospital physicians participating in the work stoppage are returning to their homes at 1100 to run private clinics, charging patients NIS 40-50 (USD 10-12) per visit. (Note: News reports August 28 state that Hamas plans to close-down all private clinics that are not licensed and registered. Hamas has claimed that the striking doctors are taking advantage of Gaza's sick by earning full PA salaries and charging patients at private clinics in the afternoon hours. End note)

Nurses Affiliated With Hamas Resist Work Stoppage

¶5. (SBU) Salhah said that the MOH union of nurses in Gaza refused initially to participate in the work stoppages, as its members had been affiliated with Hamas and did not object strongly to Hamas' administrative changes. She said that the PA threatened to withhold the nurses salaries, therefore the union leadership on August 26 instructed its membership to participate in the work stoppages.

Poor Health Care Made Worse

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¶6. (SBU) According to Salhah, Gaza MOH pharmacists are closing their operations at 1100 hours, as well, making it more difficult for Gazans for purchase medicine. She underscored that emergency services have remained open 24-hours a day in all public hospitals, with a select few nurses managing in-patient services around the clock. She added that family members have been helping to care for patients requiring over-night hospitalization, but that hospital bed sheets, floors, and restrooms remain soiled, meals unavailable, and doctors' visits rare.

DUFFY